

Giving feedback

What is feedback? - Feedback is structured information that one person offers to another about the impact of their actions or behaviour. Regular, good quality feedback is one of the most important ingredients in building constructive relationships and getting jobs done.

When giving feedback - Do	When giving feedback - Don't
<p>Do focus on performance. Focus on things that can be changed.</p> <p>“When you are late it means we don't have enough time to discuss agenda items fully”.</p>	<p>Don't focus on personality, attitudes or character or things the person can't change</p>
<p>Do be clear and direct. Use plain English and easy to understand phrases. Be brief and to the point.</p> <p>“It's important that the team know what standard to apply. I've noticed you haven't included this in your Monday meetings. I'd like you to start including it please”</p>	<p>Don't give clues or imply what you want to say. Don't have the person try to guess what you mean.</p> <p>“Well it's fairly obvious what I mean”</p>
<p>Do signal that you want to give feedback and why, then wait for the person to accept the offer.</p> <p>“Can I talk to you about our meeting today – I'm keen to share some of my ideas?”</p>	<p>Don't impose.</p> <p>Don't launch into what you want to say.</p>
<p>Do speak for yourself. Show that the words you are using are your own.</p> <p>“I noticed; I saw; I don't like”</p>	<p>Don't side step and don't mix up your thoughts and feelings with others' thoughts and feelings. You don't really know what others think unless you have asked them directly.</p>
<p>Do be clear and specific about what it is you want to talk about.</p> <p>“You kept interrupting when I was trying to describe the new service that's going to be introduced. I felt you weren't listening”</p>	<p>Don't generalise.</p> <p>“As usual you've ignored everything that's been said. You never listen”</p>
<p>Do include a positive message to balance the point about negative behaviour.</p> <p>“Your comments were really helpful and I liked the example you gave, but I didn't understand your conclusion”</p>	<p>Don't start with the negative feedback aim to open and close positively.</p>
<p>Do be timely and regular. Give the feedback at an appropriate moment as soon after the event that you want to talk about.</p> <p>“Can I catch you sometime after the meeting as I'd like to talk to you about how it went?”</p>	<p>Don't wait until the incident has passed. And don't save all your comments to say all at once.</p> <p>“I've been waiting for some time to tell you how bad you are at doing this”</p>
<p>Do be solution focused by showing that you are willing to give ideas about how they can tackle what you have raised.</p>	<p>Don't be problem focused.</p>

Tips for delivering feedback

- Prepare in advance. Have examples of the behaviour you want to talk about.
- Make the feedback a two-way conversation, not a speech.
- Be ready for resistance but don't argue - use examples to illustrate your point.
- Stop talking. Listen. Acknowledge.
- Find a way to end positively. Summarise what you have agreed.
- Don't expect instant change or indeed any change – feedback is information not an instruction.

Latest thinking

Fierce Conversations by Susan Scott

"A fierce conversation is not me telling you what I think. A fierce conversation is one that is passionate, effective, direct, thought provoking, intense, powerful, robust, untamed, and unbridled." A fierce conversation is a memorable one that challenges ideas and builds relationships.

This model is similar to that recommended for giving feedback. The difference is that the conversation is seen as the relationship between two people rather than the conversation constructed to motivate action - a thought-provoking new angle of communication.

Further reading

- People Skills by Robert Bolton, (Nov 1987) Publisher Kangaroo Press
 - Difficult conversations: How to discuss what matters most by Bruce Patton (May 2000), Publisher Penguin
 - Fierce Conversations by Susan Scott, (Aug 2003).Publisher: Piatkus Books
 - Four simple steps to giving effective feedback
www.fridayteam.co.uk/articles/2006/07/23/four-simple-steps-to-giving-effective-feedback/
 - How to give negative feedback properly
www.management.about.com/cs/peoplemanagement/ht/negativefb.htm
-

Questions for Consideration

What are the benefits of giving feedback?

How am I doing (self score 1 to 10)?

What may be holding me back from giving feedback?

What can I do to improve this skill?

How will I know I am improving?
